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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/EX AND AF/E

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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [ER](#) [ET](#) [DJ](#)
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA REPORTEDLY BACKS AFAR REBELS

REF: ASMARA 183

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for reason 1.4(d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Ali Dato Mohamed, the Djiboutian CDA in Asmara, is an ethnic Afar with good contacts in Eritrea's Afar community. He told post June 16 that the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO) operates from Ethiopia and has lately stepped up small-scale guerrilla attacks in Eritrea's Southern Red Sea administrative region (ref). Eritrean authorities have recently begun arresting family members of suspected RSADO rebels in Afambo and other Afar-dominated towns of Eritrea's southwestern panhandle, Dato reported.

[¶2.](#) (C) Dato said that the RSADO and the Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Eritrean Kunama are the only active anti-Isaias opposition groups operating in Eritrea. He said both are supported by Ethiopia, adding that senior Afar and Kunama rebels met in the capital of Ethiopia's Afar Region two weeks ago to coordinate further attacks. The Djiboutian CDA claimed there are about 10,000 Eritrean Afar refugees in Ethiopia and another 5,000 in Yemen. He has voiced criticisms to Afar elders of the RSADO's sole focus on military action while ignoring economic and social aspects of Eritrea's impoverished Afar community. Dato commented that General Karikare, head of the Eritrean navy, is an Afar and that Foreign Minister Osman Saleh, an ethnic Saho, also speaks Afar.

[¶3.](#) (C) COMMENT: The Afar, who straddle both the Eritrean-Ethiopian and Eritrean-Djiboutian borders, are apparently being used by Eritrea and Ethiopia to stir up trouble in Afar regions of Djibouti and Eritrea, respectively. While Eritrea's Afar are few in number and live in isolated communities, a growing Afar insurgency would threaten Eritrea's access to one of the country's most important (if dormant) assets, the port of Assab. END COMMENT.

MCMULLEN